

## **Volunteering Movement in Russia: Regional Presence and Future Perspectives**

**Irina Boldonova, Professor**  
*Institute of Philology and Mass Communication,  
Buryat State University, Smolina, Ulan-Ude, Russian Federation*  
*irina\_duncan@mail.ru*

**Katerina Tsetsura, Professor**  
*Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication,  
University of Oklahoma, USA*  
*tsetsura@ou.edu*

**Abstract:** This study provides an overview of the volunteering movement in Russia. Particularly, authors concentrate their discussion around major particularities of the volunteer development in Russia: the regional volunteerism, perspectives, relevant issues and the role and place of the government in the volunteering movement. After discussing historical and socio-cultural particularities of the volunteering movement in Russia, authors illustrate their points with examples from one specific region, the Republic of Buryatia, to build the argument for the need to investigate challenges and opportunities of the volunteering movement from the social, cultural perspective and offer ideas for future studies.

**Keywords:** volunteering; public sector; volunteering movement; the role of the government; regional volunteerism.

### **1. Introduction**

Volunteer can be defined as a person who is engaged in activities on an unpaid basis to solve existing social problems. Volunteer work is not permanent by nature, but can become a life-long pursuit for those who want to contribute to the betterment of society in the form of public actions, campaigns, and projects, different from traditional professional labor.

Volunteers are an important human resource and the foundation of civil society. Volunteers are involved in many types of activities: donations of many kinds, blood donation, health and social welfare, philanthropy, work in at hospitals, schools, religious organizations, sport societies and children community organizations. It is generally assumed that all volunteers have high moral standards and ideals, but we can't say that this is the only reason for unpaid service. There might be other reasons

and motivations to volunteer in a contemporary society. Volunteers' work can increase a positive image and status of a person in society and brings approval and appreciation from the colleagues and the members of volunteer organizations. Communication with new people within a framework of a volunteer project, access to new social groups, access to new ideas and new types of activities of international character, and access to various recourses, including information, finance, nature, which can be used in good will, can also be powerful motivators. Finally, many volunteers seek professional experience in a new job, which might be significant for the volunteer in the future, self-realization opportunities and managerial experience in governing significant and interesting projects.

Volunteering has successfully developed in many countries around the world, and now it is slowly becoming a significant component of social practices and social awareness in the modern Russian society. Russian researchers argue that, as a recognized basic element of socially responsible societies, volunteering should be taken into account when public policies are implemented (Osokheeva, 2012). Historical genesis of volunteering and the interaction between volunteers and the government should be analyzed in Russia from the point of the socio-cultural foundations and the present structure of the society.

This manuscript presents an overview of the volunteering movement in Russia. The discussion is focused on two important points that define particularities of the volunteering movement in Russia: the influence and involvement of the government at all levels in the development of volunteerism in the country and the regional nature of the development of volunteerism in Russia. By providing a historic background of the volunteering movement in Russia and by using various examples of volunteering initiatives from one particular region in Russia, the manuscript describes current challenges and opportunities that the volunteering movement faces in the country and offers ways of studying volunteerism in Russia from a communication standpoint.

## **2. Thinking about Volunteering in Russia**

We argue that different forms of the volunteer work presuppose three general principles: the lack of reward, compulsion, and usefulness for society. Volunteering is a kind of co-evolution of the basic subsystems of labor: state, ideally a legal state (the first sector), market economy (the second sector) and civil society (third sector). Nowadays in Russia, volunteer centers are the main link of infrastructure to support various forms of volunteering. Standardization of the volunteer centers aims to enhance the quality of volunteer services and to promote the development of a self-regulation process in the Russian volunteer sector to create conditions for active voluntary participation of citizens in public practice of socially useful activities.

Nevertheless, Russian citizens are still not actively involved to volunteering process. According to the Annual Report of the Russian Federation Civic Chamber for 2013, the number of those Russians was around 40-60%. It is obvious from various resources that informal volunteering is more developed, 38% of Russians are non-institutionalized volunteers, they are not registered members of any NGOs, but are included in the self-organization of the place of residence; only 4% of the population are volunteers included in the activities of certain NGOs (Annual Report of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation for 2013).

Kudrinskaya (2006) investigated the volunteer work in Russia from the angle of labor categories. She identified four general categories of functions of any volunteer work: 1) social, formative, developing; 2) anti-entropy; 3) integrative; and 4) socializing. Within these categories, several specific functions were identified. First, the formation and development of civil society and a sharing of civil societal values and traditions are central to volunteerism. Second, volunteerism contributes to the reduction of social entropy in society. Third, civil socialization of an individual is augmented by volunteerism. Next, volunteerism contributes to societal integration through associations of citizens thus raising social capital. Moreover, volunteer efforts stimulate cooperation to protect rights and interests of individuals and encourage self-governance and collective will through acting upon of various public issues to build on the community-based social innovations. Finally, Kudrinskaya argued that Volunteering promotes vulnerable groups support and their social adaptation through free self-expression and social creativity.

Volunteerism contributes to societal integration through associations of citizens thus raising social capital. Finally, Kudrinskaya (2006) argued that Volunteering promotes vulnerable groups support and their social adaptation through free self-expression and social creativity. Thus, all specific functions reflect the very idea of volunteering and demonstrate a great need for volunteer programs in socially responsible fully-functional societies (Heath, 2006).

For example, it can be illustrated by the analysis of 43 in-depth interviews on the web-site of Club-Volonterov Organization in Moscow. Young volunteers, members of this organization answer various questions concerning their life, childhoods, professions, hobbies and their volunteering. All of them joined the organization via Internet, linking to the forum, filling on-line special information form, having some sort of individual experience before, in the process of self-realization search. All of them sincerely speak of their strong demand to help vulnerable categories of population, especially orphans in communication and support them morally by means of games, sport events and other activities. To the question why they have become volunteers they refer to their family up-bringing, friends ties, sense of responsibility for the society. Most of the respondents think that volunteerism contributes to social policy through individual approach, personal involvement and plus joint efforts of the authorities (Club-Volonterov Organization's web-site, interviews 2007-2014).

### **3. Influence of the Government in the Volunteering Movement**

The presence of the government in Russian life is obvious: many elements of everyday existence are regulated by the government in one way or the other. Thus, it is essential to discuss the official position of the government toward volunteering and government's presence in many forms and aspects of volunteering in Russia. According to the Constitution of the Russian Federation (part 1, point 7), the most important purpose in society is a creation of conditions for decent life and free development of persons. In that sense, volunteering can be positioned as one of the central activities of any societal member. Today, however, the legal framework for volunteering has not been fully formulated, and the volunteer organizations are regulated by three different Federal Laws about non-governmental public organizations (1995). The most essential Federal Government's document was finalized in 2009 under the name "On the Concept of facilitating the development of charitable activities and volunteerism in the Russian Federation." According to this document, authorities should follow accepted registered rules for recognizing volunteer work and for implementing everyday responsibilities that might support volunteering activities. The next two Federal Laws (2010, 2011) regulate and improve taxation of non-commercial organizations and charitable activity: a very important element that allow many volunteer-based organizations exist in the so-called third sector (civil society sector), which functionality depends on the volunteers. The new governmental project for the socio-economic development of the Russia Federation by 2020 contains the part devoted to the volunteerism in the country (Federation up to 2020, confirmed by Rasporiazhenie of the Russian Federation, 2008), but the special Federal Law which will provide additional flexibility to volunteer-based organizations is still being discussed.

Volunteer organizations discuss the Federal Law's draft at their web-sites. Regional Youth Public organization "Ya – volunteer" initiated the on-line survey and the question was if there is special need to support volunteering in Russia via adopting a law. There was 81,7% of the survey respondents answers positively (Regional Youth Public organization's web-site). The survey of Union of Charitable Organizations of Russia contains the questions with the same content - 'Is the special Law on social volunteering necessary for Russia?'. The results were also expected and 80% of the respondents gave the positive reply (Union of Charitable Organizations of Russia's web-site). The 'Vector of Russia's Volunteering' also arranged an on-line survey devoted to the Federal Law, the majority, i.e. 154 participants supported the initiative of the authorities (Vector of Russia's Volunteering's web-site).

As we can see the volunteers themselves are ready to support the Federal Law because it will regulate their activities, will give them the official status, will specify the system of moral reward.

#### **4. Historical Perspective on Volunteerism: Dobrovolets vs. Volonter**

To really understand the particularities of the volunteer movement in Russia, we must look back to history of labor under socialism. The terms “volunteering” and “volunteer” (volonter, in Russian) in its modern meaning were not familiar to the Russians until the middle of 1980s. The theory of communism and socialism developed by Marks and Engels formed the theoretical-methodological basis for the development of Lenin's concept of voluntary work as a Communist labor. Lenin analyzed the real voluntary work in the forms of the so-called ‘subbotniks’ (unpaid work to benefit the community on Saturdays). During the Soviet period, subbotniks were spread out across the former USSR and were mandatory for many workers and students, particularly during Saturdays in April, the month in which Lenin was born.

The exact Russian word for volunteer, ‘dobrovolets’, was used to describe a person who, without waiting for mobilization appeal, was ready to defend the motherland in the military. In the Soviet era, the word ‘dobrovolets’ was also used to describe many young people who moved to underexplored lands in Eastern Siberia for the construction of the Baikal-Amur Railway (BAM), one of the largest construction projects ever undertaken by the USSR. At that time volunteering was associated with large all-Union campaigns and was actively supported by the existing ideological system. Very often volunteers participated in smaller, local campaigns and activities, such as reconstructing new homes for fire victims, collecting donation for building schools, hospitals and churches, and donating supplies and clothing to children in other communist countries.

In today's Russia, the term ‘volunteering’ means something different. In Russia charity and volunteering have not yet very developed. If we compare with other countries, we are just at the beginning. Nevertheless, ‘We are moving forward’, said Artem Vasilyev, one of volunteering activists of ‘Club of volunteers’. Another member of the same organization Anastasia Danilova is sure that a volunteer is ‘someone who thinks that it is necessary not only consume, but also to give back’ (Club-Volontirov Organization's web-site, interviews 2007-2014). Volunteering in Russia in the modern sense of the word began taking its shape in the 1990s, which was much later development than in USA and Europe. Yet, there are still several distinct differences between the Western and Russian understandings of volunteerism.

#### **5. How Does the Russian Volunteerism Differ from the Western One?**

In the developed countries of the West, the volunteer work is a regular social practice. Among the reasons of highly developed volunteerism are the freedom of voluntary associations of citizens, freedom of self-expression, and long-term customs, beliefs, and traditions of community cooperation of people. In the West, the Protestant

immigrant communities that value free labor as a way to salvation laid the foundation for individual and collective volunteerism.

In Russia, the lack of freedom and strong pressure of the authoritarian system did not provide many opportunities for free self-realization and expression although the traditions of mutual help and compassion were strong in the Russian peasant communities. The essential difference is also in the legal foundation for volunteering. In the United States the value of volunteer labor is assessed and accounted as part of the gross national product. Today the legislation in the U.S.A. focused on the state support, encouragement, and development of volunteering at all levels. The Russian legislation does not have a special law, or any other legal documents, regulating volunteer labor.

According to the poll center of one of the leading job-seeking online portals in Russia, Superjob.ru, only 8% of Russians would like to do volunteer work and charity. In the United States, according to the Bureau of labor statistics, 27% of the population was involved in volunteer activity by the end of 2009 (Philanthropy, 2010).

In many countries national and local centers for support and coordination of activities of volunteers are well developed. In some Western countries, the assessment of participation in volunteer activities is positioned as a social recommendation of young people. For instance, social recommendation is a document that helps to identify the quality of candidates as they apply to programs at educational institutions. Social recommendation can be the chance to obtain a university degree from a highly prestigious university for a number of students, particularly those in social work or teaching majors.

Why is the youth of America engaged in volunteering? A simple answer is that the idea of volunteering is accepted by the family, at school, in the community, and in culture of American society. The very reason of highly developed volunteerism in U.S.A. is in the system of up-bringing and education of future citizens. They perceive the ideas of charity from the childhood in their families.

In Western countries we can observe volunteers of different ages. In Russia volunteers are mainly young people, students, and often women. As Kondrashova (2012) underlined, the results of polls showed that more than 80% of volunteers in Russia are young people between 15 and 19 years old. Almost 85% from them say that they volunteer because of altruistic motives and because they wish to be useful to the society (Kondrashova). Many other volunteer coordinators also see the young age of volunteers as a problem. Anna Feldman, Director of the Volunteer Department for the 2013 Universiade in Kazan, Russia, pointed out that young age of volunteers create a series of unique challenges for volunteer coordinators and directors (Anna Feldman, personal communication, February 1, 2014). One of the main challenges is that volunteer organizations must create a comprehensive, ongoing informational

awareness program to educate potential volunteers about volunteering as a movement, in addition to educating them about the event and the cause.

In addition, many volunteer programs in Russia have limited systematic experience and expertise. Because of that, two main sports events that were organized in Russia in 2013 (Universiade) and 2014 (the Winter Olympics) served as the platforms for establishing and creating a series of basic nation-wide training programs for sports volunteers.

In general, young people in humanitarian professions and those who have better education tend to become volunteers in Russia. In today's organizations, many active young people would like to become volunteers in many areas, but special training should be done first. However, the system of special trainings in Russia is still the work in process. Recently, the training programs seem to move from one-time volunteer actions to ongoing, prolonged programs to attract various groups of the society to participate in volunteering programs. A case in point is an elaborate program for volunteerism.

## **6. Understanding Volunteerism in Regional Russia: the Role of Official Authorities**

As the largest country in the world by size, Russia is best understood through its regions. Although volunteerism development happens around the country, it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify the overall trends for volunteer development in Russia as a whole because of the vast differences in geopolitical presence and economic development of the regions (Tsetsura, 2009). In addition, regional and municipal governments often take initiative to develop unique social programs within the region individually. These programs are seen as a way to encourage the local community and civil society development in the region. They are also seen as a way to demonstrate to the federal government the readiness of regional authorities to accept federal government challenges regarding volunteering. In this section, we concentrate on one example from one region of Russia, the Republic of Buryatia, which is located in the south-central area of Eastern Siberia, about 5.5 hours away from Moscow by plane (more than 3,500 miles East of Moscow). The Republic of Buryatia (135,600 sq mi) has less than one million people living on the territory twice the size of the state of Oklahoma. More than 80 percent of the territory is in the mountains region. Buryatia also covers about 60 percent of the Lake Baikal shorelines (on the north). The city of Ulan-Ude (which is home to almost half of the population of Buryatia) is an active regional center, which was built during the tsarist Russia as the Russian tsarist empire expended east. Ulan-Ude stayed an important regional center in the Soviet Union as the population grew from about 20,000 in 1920s to more than 400,000 in 2010 (the Russian Census, 2002). Ethnic Buryats (descendants of Northern Mongols who speak a Buryat language, a particular Mongolian dialect) are accounted for less than 30 percent

of the population of Buryatia.

Volunteerism started its rapid development in Buryatia with the fall of the Soviet Union. When many social economic and service structures collapsed, regional citizens of Russia were left out without any support. Many found themselves below the poverty line and with no means to secure essential social services. The help from the Russian federal government was minimal, if any, and the local authorities and communities in many regions in Siberia started to look for ways to help people within their own regions. With the development of the nongovernment sector, supported in part by many Western grant donors, the idea of volunteerism was introduced to Buryatia.

One of the most prominent mechanisms for early volunteerism in Buryatia was a Student Volunteer Center “Good Will Corps,” which was founded in 2001 at the East-Siberian State University of Technologies. The Center consists of more than 50 students (the number changes depending on educational process and year seasons). The students carry out charity activities, work with orphans, support the overall volunteer movement in the region, care for the elderly, and promote the importance of donation and healthy lifestyle. Volunteers, mostly social work students, realize the importance of their knowledge, socialization, integration, self-expression, and public recognition within the public sector. During the last decade, the active development of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and a tradition of active public service in the region contribute the further development of volunteerism in Buryatia. Today, there are at least 40 public NGOs, which provide social management services in resolving vitally important issues.

But among the well-known factors and circumstances for the volunteering development in the Russia’s federal region Republic of Buryatia is also an early official policy of the Republic government related to the third sector. Buryatia was one of the very first regions that became active on the map of volunteers in Russia: the first volunteer training centers were created with the help of the International Volunteer Organization back in 2001 in two Russian cities, Ulan-Ude, the regional capital of Buryatia, and in Novgorod (Khoroshikh, 2008).

In the late 2000s, accumulation of knowledge, skills, and practical experience expanded the vision of the roles and functions, as well as opportunities for volunteering in the modern Russian society. As a result of these changes organizational forms and methods of working with volunteers reached another level of involvement and management. In order to provide information about volunteerism and healthy lifestyle promotion, the Committee for Youth Policy in the region of Buryatia created the Joint Republican Center of Volunteers. Now the young people, students and high school seniors, can participate in campaigns and events working as volunteers, after registering as volunteers with municipal authorities and receiving an ‘Individual volunteer’s book’. Particular attention is given to sports volunteerism in the region,



which includes everything from helping to organize various sports events to participating in the public sports celebrations throughout the year.

In 2010s, the Buryatia's Committee for Youth Policy actively engaged in the development of policies that guide the volunteer movement in the region, with the financial support and push from the federal government. For instance, in 2011, the Committee began implementing the project under the name 'State support for Youth Volunteer Initiatives'. The project presupposed a broad range of events and actions financially supported from the official regional government resources between 2011 and 2015, such as the contest 'Volunteer of the Year', the social project 'Volunteer School' the festival of youth organizations 'Our Time' and the traditional campaign 'The Spring Charity Week' among others.

In 2014, from April to June we empirically tested the role of the Buryatia's Committee for Youth Policy in volunteerism development and employed the survey, where 134 volunteers under the age from 18 to 28 years old participated. The question 'What is the role of the Committee in organizing public campaigns?' required the detail information on multiple dimensions of evaluation. Among the dimensions there were such options as: 'provide coordination', 'provide full financial and managerial assistance', 'they act as observers', 'do not participate'. The majority of the respondents, i.e. 128 survey participants evaluated the Committee's role in volunteerism arrangement as essential and they were satisfied with providing full financial and managerial assistance. The question 'Which volunteering project did you like most of all and why?' was given the detailed responses, because volunteers positively evaluating the role of the Committee, expressed their attitude towards the practical results, real social impacts and the community's feedback. They were encouraged in giving objective opinion by providing anonymous responses. The traditional campaign 'The Spring Charity Week' was named by 110 respondents as the most popular and effective type of volunteering activities, arranged by the Committee, which easily explained because this traditional campaign has been arranged since 1999 and usually covers no less than 700-800 thousand volunteers all over the country. Also the respondents were eager to participate at sport volunteering and 93 respondents expressed their desire to take part in the Federal Youth Project 'Team 2018' and F1 Russian Grand Prix Sochi Circuit.

By questioning each specific social actor we generalized individual experiences and came to the conclusion that Ulan-Ude-city officials and local government are moving to more comprehensive volunteerism management with the focus on active interaction with youth initiatives, understanding effective linkages, which result in real social problems solutions.

## 7. Regional Volunteers and Environmental Issues

Most of the volunteer organizations in Buryatia are focused on the environmental activism to protect the Lake Baikal. To this day, environmental activism is perhaps the most important and the most popular area for volunteering in the region. Because the region is adjacent to the famous Lake Baikal, ecological volunteerism is well represented in Buryatia. One of the first active NGOs in Ulan-Ude-city is the club 'Firm', which was founded in 1988 first as an eco-tourist club and then as a recourse center for public youth movement. It is now a well-known center for volunteering. The center focuses on three aspects: 1) creating a better volunteering experience by promoting excellent leadership, 2) volunteer image in the region, and 3) volunteerism involvement of the youth (Club 'Firm', 2015).

Over the years, the protection of the Lake Baikal, the largest by volume fresh water reservoir on the planet, has attracted great attention of thousands of environmental activists and volunteers around the world. The part of the Lake Baikal is in Buryatia, and thus activist organizations and many volunteers have been participating in many local, regional, national, and international activities to bring attention to the environmental conditions and protection of Baikal. The most well-known nonprofit volunteer-centered organizations are *Baikal eco-recourse*, *Greenpeace*, *Firm*, *For Clean Baikal's Shore*, and *Big Baikal Path*. These organizations actively contribute to the growing influence of volunteers and the volunteering movement in the region and have effect on the institutionalization of civic initiatives in Buryatia as they become mediators between the community and authorities. In many cases, these organizations also engage in using a so-called boomerang effect to achieve the desired communication outcome. A boomerang pattern was first described by Keck and Sikkink (1998) as a process by which nongovernment organizations (NGOs) which cannot pressure their own nation-states, can communicate their concerns to similar organizations in other countries. In turn, organizations in other countries pressure their own nation-states to make policy changes. So at the end, one country can pressure the other country to change policies after the heavy groundwork has been collectively done by NGOs in both countries. Such boomerang effect (Tsetsura, 2013) is a result of a similar process, which happens in Buryatia at the regional level. The boomerang effect allows environmental volunteer organizations in Buryatia, for example, to achieve great success within the region by working with more powerful volunteer organizations outside the region and sometimes the country (as it is the case with Green Peace) to achieve the environmental policy changes in Buryatia.

Regional practice of volunteering demonstrates an advanced level of the movement. In Buryatia, programs for youth volunteering occur within the framework of educational institutions and youth organizations organized by the regional and municipal authorities and organizations centered on the social work. For example, the Buryatia's volunteering resource lists 196 volunteer teams, most of which are registered with educational institutions.

Regional volunteering continues to be used by non-profit organizations as a basic resource for increasing efficiency of their activity. The tendency toward empowerment of voluntary participation of citizens (through the work of the NGOs, social institutions, and other organizations) is clearly seen in the areas of secondary and higher education, health care, science, culture, social support of the population, physical culture, sports and physical training, environmental protection, and others.

### **8. The Growth of Sports Volunteerism in Russia**

As Russia started to prepare to host the 2013 Universiade and the 2014 Winter Olympics, the year of 2009 was declared as the Year of Youth and Volunteering in Russia. Because of this designation, volunteer activities got additional impulses and support from the government and within the governing structures. One of indicators of effectiveness for evaluating the success of the Year of Youth was the percent of young people who participated in volunteering activities. As a result of active sports volunteer programming, by 2015, Russia expect to increase a number of young people between 14 and 30 years old who apply for volunteer programs. In some regions, the authorities argue that the number of young volunteers should be no less than 18% of the whole population between 14 and 30 years old (Osokheeva, 2012).

These two international sports competitions: the 2014 Winter Olympics Games in Sochi and the 2013 Universiade (the world's largest international sports competition for student athletes, second world's largest sports competition after the Olympics) provided a great opportunity to design, develop, and test a series of nation-wide volunteer training campaigns. These global sports events in some ways started a large government-driven machine of organized volunteer training and movement across Russia to prepare for the events and to ensure successful games. The 2013 Universiade gathered, organized, and trained more than 20,000 volunteers from 34 regions of Russia (Feldman, 2013), and the 2014 Winter Olympics recruited and trained more than 80,000 volunteers (Samko, 2013). Because of the minimal previous local experience with sports volunteers, many programs were heavily based on the past experiences of others from the West and on the Western models of sports volunteering. Russian volunteer organizers had to adapt and test the programs in practice in real time (A. Feldman, personal communication, February 8, 2014). In addition, according to Feldman, e-learning has become one of the most widely-spread ways to ensure the proper training for volunteers during large, federally sponsored events, such as the 2013 Universiade and the 2014 Winter Olympic Games.

In 2011, the Federal Agency on Youth arranged a public campaign 'Train of Youth', a train that traveled along the Trans-Siberian Railway from Moscow to Ulan-Ude and Irkutsk and then back to Moscow. The train passed nine Siberian cities where volunteers participated in various actions, events, contests, and festivals. More than 700 volunteers of Buryatia became part of the campaign as they met members of the Sochi

2014 Olympic Committee and the Organizing Committee of the 2013 Universiade in Kazan. Again it was an example of a systematic approach to the development of volunteering training programs in Russia, heavily supported and sponsored by the federal and local governments. The 'Train of Youth' campaign showed a specific feature of the Russian volunteering: any large-scale initiatives usually come from the government authorities.

### **9. Current Trends in Volunteering Movement in Russia**

During the last decade, the role of volunteering is often associated with the possibilities of growing one's personal character and developing leadership and career skills. Globalization of the 21st Century brings new challenges for improving the methodological base for organizing educational processes among volunteers, including the use of the Internet information resources and technologies of distance education. E-learning becomes a very popular tool among volunteer organizations to set up nation-wide and regional trainings for large sports events, such as the 2013 Universiade and the 2014 Winter Olympic Games. Today popular Russian portals provide opportunities for young Russians to register for volunteering within their communities. Volunteer management online centers are also available and include [www.jaba.ru](http://www.jaba.ru) and [www.center-id.ru](http://www.center-id.ru) among others.

*The latest development is the 10<sup>th</sup> all-Russian conference 'Strategy of volunteerism development in Russia-2020: Road map', which took place in November of 2013 in Moscow. The Russian Federation Civic Chamber gathered participants from around the country to build a so-called Road Map for volunteer involvement of economically active population up to 30-40% in 15-20 years (Samko, 2013). Vladimir Khromov, director of the NGO Association of Volunteer Organizations and Movements, stated that development of volunteering is beneficial for regional authorities (Samko, 2013). "If the state would like the NGOs to do something for regional authorities, it needs to allocate resources," Mr. Khromov said. "NGOs are limited in resources. They have problems with the premises, social advertising, and access to information resources for conveying their expertise" (p. #).*

But once again, the main difference between volunteering movement of the West and of Russia is in the high involvement of the government in organizing and centralizing volunteering movement. In some ways, the organic process of volunteering almost loses its basic premise of being a product of the fully functional civic society (Heath, 2006). Today in the region of Buryatia, authorities suggest to develop a system of recognition and financial and moral stimuli for volunteering via grants, stipends, and special target financing for permanent volunteer initiatives. For example, active volunteer groups that work in Buryatia as part of the Red Cross and health education and prevention of AIDS are already eligible for several government grants to maintain and grow their presence and their volunteer missions. In some ways, the strong support

of the volunteer organizations by the government in Russia demonstrates the difficulties that the third sector (the nonprofit, nongovernment social sector) faces in Russia as it tries to build its case for existence in Russian communities as part of the fully functional society. The government of Russia, at all levels, still tries to hold on to the top-down approach to control all outputs and initiatives related to the social services. However, some of these efforts backfire, particularly when volunteers start working with the internationally recognized powerful groups in support of common causes, such as environmental protection.

#### **10. Volunteerism in Russia: Relevant Issues and Perspectives from the Pilot Study in the Republic of Buryatia**

Over the last 15 years, volunteerism in Russia has been successful in several areas, particularly in the area of large-scale sports events. However, achievements in sports volunteerism is juxtaposed by hot-burning questions, unsolved problems, and existing contemporary issues about the nature and function of volunteerism in the contemporary Russian society. As E. Ilyina, a chairperson of 'Firm', the ecological volunteer club in Eastern Siberia, said the most important problem in regional Russia is a lack of the legislative foundation for the third sector and the lack of regulations in income taxation for those organizations (E. K. Ilyina, personal communication, February 1, 2014). NGOs in Russia to this day have to find a way to pay taxes on travel expenses, meals, and accommodations of volunteers (E. K. Ilyina, personal communication, February 1, 2014). In Buryatia, as well as in other regions of Russia, NGOs face the same obstacles: the lack of qualified social managers, lack of legal, programmatic, and social frameworks to fulfill tasks by volunteers, and a contradiction between a great demand to use the volunteer labor by municipal authorities on the one hand, and the lack of legislative and economic mechanisms to calculate and evaluate the results of volunteers' labor, on the other. The Russian society has not yet fully embraced the system of moral reward for unpaid labor that benefits the society at large.

As a result, social studies can provide important entry points into investigation of opportunities and challenges volunteering movement faces in Russia. Understanding how the idea of a fully functional society (Heath, 2006) contributes to the development of volunteerism should be investigated within the context of Russian realities.

Another possible area of investigation is an isolation of the volunteer sector and an emphasis of some programs, such as environmental or sports volunteerism, over others. This problem was clear from the overwhelming efforts that were put behind the sports volunteerism for the 2013 Universiade and the 2014 Winter Olympic Games. Contributions of volunteers to the society go beyond sports volunteerism. Scholars need to investigate whether a wide access to information available about other areas for volunteering and need to find ways to evaluate the success of volunteering processes. One of possible questions to investigate is why many Russians do not express gratitude

toward volunteers or do not recognize the problems volunteers face in the regions. Perhaps, the majority of ordinary people are not even aware of campaigns and actions. Or maybe here are historical, cultural, and social reasons for ignoring the volunteer movement. In-depth interviews and focus groups with citizens who do and do not volunteer in their communities might help to shed light to this issue.

In order to get answers to these questions, we employed a pilot in-person survey among more than 200 volunteers in Buryatia. We utilized the snowball sampling and conducted the survey in a three-month timeframe from June to August 2014. The respondents were asked to answer 16 open-ended questions concerning volunteering as a subject matter, including their attitudes toward the role of the government and the volunteering developments. We had a 40% response rate, which is acceptable for the in-person survey.

The analysis of the results showed that a half of the respondents became volunteers via Internet. They chose to volunteer because their friends volunteered. Half of the respondents have been volunteers for more than one year and still expressed intention and desire to volunteer. Motivation for volunteering included the desire to get new friends and acquaintances, to acquire new ideas and knowledge, and to enrich personal experience. Most of the survey participants were students or young working professionals so it is understandable that they wanted to be useful for the society, as previous studies showed.

This pilot study confirmed that average Russian citizens often ignore unpaid work and that they are not interested in volunteering because few ways exist to get recognition or reward. The respondents noted passive and indifferent positions of older citizens and the lack of information about volunteering campaigns in the Internet as obstacles for attracting more volunteers. Negative attitudes toward volunteerism among average citizens and the lack of information are among main obstacles to the volunteering movement in Russia.

The respondents expressed hope that the government and the municipal authorities would develop a system of meaningful rewards and compensations, which would allow to improve the image of volunteers and volunteering movement in the region. The majority of respondents stated that volunteering directions that require most volunteers in Buryatia are the environmental movement and social work because today environmental issues at the Baikal region are of great importance. More and more students and young professionals join environmental volunteering movement to make possible contribution to preservation of the unique Lake Baikal, its flora and fauna. The volunteers in Buryatia are an active part of the population involved in grass-root initiatives in the field of environmental ethics.

The survey asked another relevant question: what is to be done in order to attract more attention of the public to volunteering. More than 70% of the respondents answered that public campaigns as well as volunteer organizations should be promoted in the

Internet and in the mass media. The Russian Federation is a country with a vast territory from Kaliningrad to Vladivostok, and each region possesses its volunteer groups that would want to be in touch with their colleagues from across the country for interacting and exchanging the best practices and examples. Because of the distance between regions and the lack of development of clear networks among volunteer organizations across the country, in addition to several technical challenges (such as unsatisfactory and uneven Internet connections from region to region), volunteer organizations face difficulties in face-to-face communication and active cooperation and coordination of efforts. Challenges and opportunities volunteer organizations face as they try to create networks across the country can and should be investigated from the communication standpoint. Looking at the structures of the networks of regional and national volunteer organizations can help Russian communication scholars to identify reasons behind the inability of these organizations to effectively communicate with one another.

## 11. Conclusion

The volunteer issues are of strategic state importance and essential practice for civil society development and is regarded as one of the factors of social involvement in such areas as social work, education, science, culture, and environmental protection. Russia still has not excelled in modern scientific methodology and methods of organizing and developing the volunteers' potential. Scholars need to take into consideration the world experience, historical traditions, and national peculiarities. Successful volunteering allows the society to operate in harmony and to develop interests of all the citizens on the basis of self-organization and self-realization. As a result, other subsystems, the state and the business, would become more socially responsible and accountable. Volunteering is not an aim, but a result of the moral development of the human kind and the positive sign of the fully functional society building. And in this sense, studying volunteering movement should have its place in humanitarian studies for better ways to reach civil society.

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